

Message Text

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ALL OTHER CANADIAN POSTS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 QUEBEC 0133

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: RYAN JOINS THE HEAVYWEIGHT CONTENDERS

REF: QUEBEC 0045

BEGIN SUMMARY:

1. THE RECENT CHOICE OF CLAUDE RYAN AS LEADER OF THE QUEBEC LIBERAL PARTY MARKS THE SUCCESSFUL CULMINATION OF THE FIRST STAGE IN PROVIDING A STRONG, ATTRACTIVE FEDERALIST ALTERNATIVE TO CONFUSED AND FRIGHTENED QUEBEC VOTERS. THE IMPRESSIVELY OPEN AND DEMOCRATIC PROCESS THROUGH WHICH RYAN WON THE RIGHT TO LEAD THE LIBERAL PARTY HAS ALSO HAD THE EFFECT OF EXORCISING THE PARTY OF THE IMAGE OF CORRUPTION AND INEFFECTIVENESS THAT IT ACQUIRED UNDER ITS FORMER LEADER, ROBERT BOURASSA. WITH THE AUSTERE, CIVIL LIBERTARIAN RYAN AS LEADER, THE REGENERATED LIBERAL PARTY TAKES ON A NEW MORAL AUTHORITY. MOREOVER, THE PARTY MILITANTS, WHO ONLY LAST YEAR WERE SUFFERING GLASSY-EYES TRAUMA FROM THEIR STUNNING DEFEAT AT THE HAND OF PQ, HAVE NOW ACQUIRED A RENEWED FIGHTING SPIRIT. THE LEADERSHIP BATTLE HAS RESTORED SELF-CONFIDENCE, AND HAS GIVEN THEM A LEADER WHO GIVES IMPRESSION OF HAVING THE STRENGTH, THE INTELLIGENCE, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE MORAL AUTHORITY AND THE GENUINE QUEBEC NATIONALIST CREDENTIALS NEEDED TO TAKE ON PQ LEADERS ON THEIR OWN GROUND. RYAN'S VICTORY, IN OTHER WORDS, HAS MADE IT A WHOLE NEW BALL GAME. THIS CABLE SUMS UP THE CAMPAIGN IN WHICH RYAN, AN OUTSIDER WHO BECAME A LIBERAL PARTY MEMBER ONLY DAYS BEFORE ANNOUNCING HIS CANDIDACY FOR THE LEADERSHIP, MANAGED TO CRUSH BY BETTER THAN A TWO TO ONE MARGIN HIS OPPONENT RAYMOND GARNEAU,

A PARTY STALWART AND FAVORITE OF THE ESTABLISHMENT.
END SUMMARY.

2. AT THE OUTSET OF THE CAMPAIGN LAST JANUARY, RYAN WAS WIDELY PERCEIVED TO BE TRAILING GARNEAU, OR AT BEST TO BE NECK-AND-NECK WITH HIM. ALTHOUGH A WELL-KNOWN FIGURE OF GREAT MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL AUTHORITY IN THE PROVINCE, THE FORMER LE DEVOIR PUBLISHER LACKED LIBERAL PARTY CREDENTIALS, HAD NO CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION, AND LITTLE IN EXPERIENCE IN PARTY POLITICS. RYAN HAD MOREOVER COMMITTED WHAT WAS TO SOME LIBERAL FAITHFUL THE UNFORGIVABLE SIN OF URGING QUEBECOIS TO VOTE FOR THE PARTY QUEBECOIS IN 1976, ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE LIBERAL ADMINISTRATION OF ROBERT BOURASSA WAS CORRUPT AND INCOMPETENT. GARNEAU, ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS A WELL-KNOWN VIGOROUS, SAVVY YOUNG POLITICIAN, A LONG-TIME PARTY WARRIOR WHO HAD BEEN FINANCE MINISTER IN THE BOURASSA ADMINISTRATION. HE HAD FURTHERMORE, AN ESTABLISHED CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION AND THE SUPPORT, EITHER TACIT OR OPEN, OF A NUMBER OF PARTY ELDERS INCLUDING FORMER PREMIER JEAN LESAGE.

3. NEVERTHELESS, ONCE RYAN DECIDED TO ENTER THE LEADERSHIP CONTEST, HE BEGAN TO PULL AWAY FROM GARNEAU FROM THE OUTSET. HE WAS WELL RECEIVED AT THE FIRST CANDIDATES MEETING IN HULL AND, THUS ENCOURAGED, DEVELOPED INCREASING AUTHORITY AT SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS. AN UNEXCEPTIONAL ORATOR BUT A SKILLED DEBATER, RYAN WAS AT HIS BEST DURING THE GIVE-AND-TAKE OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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QUESTION PERIODS AND CONSISTENTLY OUTSHONE GARNEAU AT THESE SESSIONS. RYAN'S CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION, STUMBLING AT FIRST, IMPROVED DRAMATICALLY AFTER THE FIRST WEEKS. AT THE SHERBROOKE MEETING, RYAN SUPPORTERS PACKED THE MEETING-HALL AND OUTSHOUTED THE GARNISTES -- IT WAS THE FIRST TIME GARNEAU'S SUPPOSEDLY IMPREGNABLE ORGANIZATION HAD BEEN OUTMANEUVERED. TWO WEEKS LATER IN QUEBEC CITY, THE HEART OF GARNEAU TERRITORY, RYAN SUPPORTERS SWEEPED THE DELEGATE SLATE. BY THIS TIME, RYAN'S CAMPAIGN HAD DEVELOPED A MOMENTUM THAT WAS TO PROVE UNSTOPPABLE. BY THE MIDDLE OF MARCH, POLLS WERE SHOWING RYAN TO HAVE A TWO TO ONE LEAD IN DELEGATES, A MARGIN THAT STAYED FIRM RIGHT UP TO CONVENTION TIME, DESPITE ALL GARNEAU'S EFFORTS TO TURN THINGS AROUND.B

NOTE BY OC/T: MESSAGE DELAYED IN TRANSMISSION.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 QUEBEC 0133

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (FOR TEXT)

4. DESPITE SOME NASTINESS TOWARD THE END (GARNEAU CALLED RYAN A "CRYPTO-SEPARATIST" WHO WOULD BE JUST AS BAD FOR CANADA AS RENE LEVESQUE), THE CAMPAIGN WAS EXCEPTIONALLY CLEAN, OPEN, AND IMPRESSIVE, AND DID MUCH TO BURNISH THE NEW IMAGE OF THE QUEBEC LIBERALS. GONE WERE THE BACKROOM DEALS AND THE DIRTY TACTICS WHICH MARRED PREVIOUS CAMPAIGNS. BOTH CANDIDATES CAMPAIGNED ON THE ISSUES: GARNEAU PUSHED HARD FOR LESS GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE IN THE ECONOMY AND MORE HELP FOR BUSINESSMEN; RYAN, WHO HAS LONG ADVOCATED SPECIAL STATUS FOR QUEBEC WITHIN THE CANADIAN CONFEDERATION, PLAYED DOWN THE CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES TO THE POINT WHERE IT WAS SOMETIMES DIFFICULT TO SEE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE POSITIONS OF THE TWO CANDIDATES. IN THE END, IT WAS RYAN'S IMAGE OF MORAL AUTHORITY, COUPLED WITH THE FACT THAT HE WAS AN OUTSIDER OF UNQUESTIONED INTEGRITY, UNTAINTED BY THE POLITICAL EXCESSES OF PAST LIBERAL ADMINISTRATIONS, THAT CARRIED THE DAY FOR HIM.

5. COMMENT: RYAN NOW JOINS PIERRE TRUDEAU AND RENE LEVESQUE AS A CHAMPION OF ONE OF THE HISTORIC CONSTITUTIONAL OPTIONS BEING OFFERED QUEBECOIS IN THIS TIME OF NATIONAL DECISION. PARADOXICALLY, ALONGSIDE THESE FRANCOPHONE POLITICAL GIANTS, ANGLOPHONE CANADIAN POLITICAL LEADERS, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION
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OF SEMI-RETIRED ROBERT STANSFIELD, ARE DECIDEDLY LILLIPUTIAN. AS WITH THE OTHER TWO MEMBERS OF THIS TRIAD, RYAN IS A MAN OF HIGH INTELLIGENCE, INTEGRITY AND ENJOYS GREAT RESPECT THROUGHOUT CANADA. THE FACT THAT THE LIBERALS CHOSE SUCH A MAN AS LEADER IS A MEASURE OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE CRISIS QUEBEC NOW FACES. FIERCELY INDEPENDENT, RYAN IS NO ORGANIZATION MAN.

IN FACT, HE JOINED THE LIBERALS ONLY A FEW DAYS BEFORE ANNOUNCING HIS CANDIDACY FOR PARTY LEADERSHIP AND, AS EDITOR-PUBLISHER OF LE DEVOIR, ENCOURAGED HIS READERS TO VOTE AGAINST LIBERALS AND FOR PQ IN THE LAST ELECTION. IRONICALLY, IT IS JUST THESE FACTORS WHICH GIVE HIM SPECIAL AUTHORITY DURING THE PRESENT CRISIS. ABOVE ALL. HOWEVER, THE CRISIS ITSELF SEEMS TO HAVE DICTATED THE CHOICE OF RYAN AS A POTENTIAL NATIONAL LEADER. HE OFFERS THE REASSURING IMPRESSION OF SOLIDITY AND AUTHORITY AT A TIME OF UNCERTAINTY AND CONFUSION, MUCH AS DEGAULLE DID TO THE FRENCH IN THEIR TIMES OF TROUBLE. SIMILARLY, THE FACT THAT HIS IDEAS ARE NOT ALWAYS WELL UNDERSTOOD BY HIS LISTENERS SEEMS TO ADD TO HIS MYSTIQUE. WHILE THE MAJORITY OF QUEBECOIS HAVE LOST THEIR FAITH, THEY HAVE NOT LOST THE HABIT OF BELIEVING. THE STERN FATHER FIGURE PRESENTED BY RYAN MAY SEEM ANACHRONISTIC TO MANY OF US BUT, IN FACT, IT MAY BE PERFECTLY SUITED TO THE TEMPER OF THE TIMES IN QUEBEC. SEVERAL WHO KNOW RYAN WELL, INCLUDING ALAVAL UNIVERSITY POLITICAL SCIENTIST VINCENT LEMIEUX, HAVE COMMENTED TO ME THAT HIS MOST VULNERABLE WEAKNESS AS A POLITICIAN COULD BE AN INABILITY TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH THE YOUNGER VOTERS. HIS "RIGIDITY" WHEN PRINCIPLE IS INVOLVED IS ALSO VITED AS A POTENTIAL PROBLEM. I BELIEVE THESE OBSERVATIONS HAVE SOME VALIDITY, ESPECIALLY AS RYAN FACES ADVERSARIES OF THE CALIBER OF LEVESQUE OR TRUDEAU. BOTH ARE MORE HIS INTELLECTUAL PEERS THAN WAS THE BRIGHT BUT COMPARATIVELY SUPERFICIAL OPPONENT IN THE PARTY LEADERSHIP CAMPAIGN, RAYMOND GARNEAU. DESPITE THESE POTENTIAL WEAKNESSES, HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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RYAN SEEMS DESTINED TO BE AN EXTREMELY DANGEROUS OPPONENT FOR THE PQ. IN THE MORE DISTANT FUTURE HE COULD ALSO POSE GREATER PROBLEMS THAN THE PEQUISTES FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS WHO WISH TO RESIST SUBSTANTIAL ALTERATION IN THE PRESENT FEDERAL CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS, PARTICULARLY SHOULD HE REPLACE RENE LEVESQUE AS PRIME MINISTER OF QUEBEC. MCNAMARA

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